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->From the Editor’s Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
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It’s been another one of those weeks, folks. If I seem out of sorts and not my usual sarcastic or joking self, I have my reasons. And to "complicate" things, I’ve been sick all week with a nasty cold, the weather has been downright cold here, and the job has been stressful. And those were the better events of the week! I wish things were better and I could go off on a tangent voicing my opinions of Microsoft’s latest tactics regarding their antitrust case appeal. Or, the variety of ways the "free ISP" companies are looking at to entice their userbase to pay fees. Or, will the legislature finally pass some bills to protect our online privacy and fight spam? And possibly a few other interesting and burning topics that we’re presented with these days.

But, I don’t have the energy or enthusiasm to sit here and focus on them this week. Bear with me, and it will pass.

Until next time...

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
jmirando@portone.com

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Well, old man winter hasn’t released his grip on the northeast yet. I hadn’t really expected to have winter done and over with so quickly, but a few warm days had me thinking about how nice it would be to move on to spring early.

Actually, I like the cold weather. I’ve always been more comfortable with the temperature a little low rather than a little high. There’s just something about a cold crisp morning, the special kind of silence as a light snow falls in the evening (notice that I said "a LIGHT snow"). Some people fuss and fret about the low temperatures, but my feeling is, "Heck, you can always throw on another blanket".

Of course, you have to deal with the snow, the never-ending potholes, and the complete idiots who seem to have forgotten what driving in the snow is like even though they’ve lived here their entire lives. Then there are the heating bills, the burst pipes, the going outside early to let the car warm up, and the slight feeling of cabin fever that begins to set in by the end of winter. I can deal with those, I just don’t particularly look forward to them.

I guess that everything really is a trade-off, and you've got to both pick and choose and take what you get. That's probably a good description of life in general. Of course, winter will give way to spring. In life, it never ends. There's always choice, and there's always a lack of it. Yet somehow we muddle through, doing what needs to be done and sometimes even finding some unexpected enjoyment along the way. Take it while you can get it, folks.... there's another choice waiting for you right around the corner.

Now let's get on with the news, hints, tips, and info from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup

Bret Kellihan asks:

"Has anyone written a TCP/IP stack for the ST systems? What about clients like telnet, ftp, and www?"

John Banbury asks Bret:

"Where have you been? Look for STING or STIK2 on ftp sites such as chapelie.rma.ac.be "

Ken Kosut asks for help with a Falcon RAM upgrade:

"I recently had some problems installing a WB Systemtechnik RAM board on my Falcon.

I took the board to another electronics shop for a 2nd opinion.

The electronics technician examined the board.
He said the board was extremely well made and that
The "tighter - prong like connectors" are a much better connection.
He said the problem could be remedied with a new connector.

WB Systemtechnik emailed me. They wanted pictures or schematics.
I tried to do a schematic, but I don't think that is going to do it.

I don't have a digital camera. I'd like to try to scan the damaged part in and use Scanedit+ to show him where the problem is.

I think this file gets saved in .IMG format. Can I just email WB Systemtechnik this file? Or do I have to convert it?

BTW - this part cannot be found in just any electronics store. The technician said He's never seen a connector like that."

Peter West asks Ken:

"Can't you take a normal photo and send it snail-mail? It may need a supplementary close-up lens on the camera. You can then circle the problem with a highlighter."

Derryck Croker adds:

"It’s normal to compress files to ZIP or LZH format before sending, but for graphics it’s more usual to change the format to GIF - the result is compressed by virtue of the format, and is more readily viewable by the receiver.

Since you’re trying to get a problem sorted out,that solution seems to be the best."

John Garone asks about modem speed:

"Although I can connect at 115,200 there are a lot of "time-outs" as compared to 57,600 which results in more continuous downloads. This happens with NG and Web downloads. I suspect it may be a setting in StinG’s default.cfg

Any thoughts?

   Running the following:
C-LAB Falcon MKI / Seagate 1g / SupraExpress56k / CAB 2.8 / Newsie .961/ STinG 1.26 / Dialer 1.17 / HSMODEM7 PKG. / NVDI 5.01

I recently purchased a Phantom SE (and yes, I sent Ctirad his money). I have’nt installed it yet but am wondering if the Phantom will aid the Falcon modem port!"

Jo Even Skarstein tells John:

"Maybe. My Speedres-card (18/36MHz, later modified to 20/40MHz) didn’t help much though. This is a software-problem, and can only be avoided with significantly faster hardware (unless the software (driver) is replaced). I suggest you use 57k6 instead of 115k2, or at least don’t use the mouse while online."

John tells Jo Even:

"Some improvement has been made here by changing the MSS to 1484 in Sting’s default.cfg and MTU to 1524 in the Dialer. The latter of which I accidently found was changed by my ISP from 1500. A difference of 40 was recommended by Ronald Andersson. Still plenty of time-outs though! I’m thinking of replacing the chips in the modem circuit some day to see if that helps also (last resort)."

Jeff Armstrong asks about MiNT stability:

"Hey everyone. I’ve been wanting to use a couple of new MiNT applications that require MiNT kernels above 1.15.5. However, as I understand it, that was the last "stable" release and the newer kernels are betas. Am I correct in this assumption? If so, are the newer kernels more stable?"

Martin Byttebier tells Jeff:

"1.15.5 is indeed the last public release. I’ve been using 1.15.10b for quite some now without any problem. So far it’s the most stable kernel I’ve used."

Jeff tells Martin:

"Ok, I downloaded the Mint 1.15.10b kernel from www.freemint.de. I am

running the 030 kernel on my TT. Now I'm attempting to use Geneva on top of it (which doesn;t even seem that stable on top of 1.15.5, BTW). I renamed Mint030.prg Mintnp.prg to disable memory protection, but apparently that doesn';t do squat. At bootup, Mint said memory protection was enabled. Then later on, well into the driver loading procedures, I get memory violations that halt the system.

Now I'm sure Geneva (and MultiTOS, which is what I may switch back to) both need memory protection disabled. How do I go about doing this with the new 030 kernel?"

Konrad Kokoszkiewicz tells Jeff:

"Not sure about Geneva, MTOS works with memory protection enabled. Although without mp it is stabler.

Hold down left shift while booting MiNT then press
"y" as an answer to the question which appears."

Mike Freeman adds:

"Mint with Geneva can be quite temperamental, especially when it comes to AUTO folder order, what programs are running, etc. It took a bit of trial and error to figure out exactly what to do to get a stable system. It does run usably stable, though, if you have it set right. Try disabling all AUTO and ACC programs and Mint extensions except the bare essentials needed to run Geneva and Mint (i.e. only Mint in the AUTO folder, and only the MINT.CNF file in the MINT or MULTITOS folder, and only use the MINT.CNF file that came with Geneva - save your old one under a different name). This *should* be pretty stable. From there, begin adding AUTO programs one at a time. If anything becomes unstable, then adjust the running order, testing it before Mint, after Mint, and before/after other programs that might interfere. If it still doesn't work, the program's not usable with this setup. Once you've got a good basic AUTO setup, add ACC programs one at a time, then Mint extensions one at a time, then editing the MINT.CNF file with your personal preferences/file paths, etc. It worked on my system. I hope it works for you! It's not a fun process, but it's sometimes the only way.

I couldn't get version 1.15.10b to even make it through the boot process without bombs. I'm sticking with 1.15.5 for now."

Martin Byttebier adds:

"As far as I know, since 1.15.10b renaming the prg name to enable/disable Memory protection does not work. There is a special bootmenu, provoked by holding down the shift key during the boot process in which one can switch off/on memory protection. Maybe that's your problem.

Furthermore 1.15.10b has an build in RAM-disk. Are you using a RAM-disk like for instance fnramfs.xfs? If so delete it. It clashes with the build in RAM disk."

TJ Andrews asks about cookies and CAB:

"I've been fumbling around with the demo version of CAB 2.7 for a while now (BTW, does anybody know where I can get the full English version of 2.7 or 2.8 in the US?), and I just don't have a clue as to how I should set my cookie options. I've heard a lot of things about cookies, some

good and some bad, and it’s hard to know what to do, or why I should do it.

To review, the CAB options about accepting cookies are:
Always
Never
Always ask
Store but don’t use

I’ve been using the last one, for lack of a good reason to use either of the first two absolutes. The third option isn’t very attractive, because I’ve heard that some sites are very persistent in offering cookies until they’re accepted. I just didn’t want to be bothered. Now I’m beginning to wonder if that’s really the way to go.

Can anybody explain the advantages and disadvantages of each option?"

Dan Ackerman tells TJ:

"Always

Good... never have to worry about turning cookies on.

Bad. A lot of internet ad servers will compile more and more information about you. Making it easier to target you for marketing etc. So far courts in the US have ruled it’s their data.

Never

What I generally use unless I hit a site where I need cookies then I enable them. In reality it’s only a portion of the total number of web sites that really need cookies. Many will request them though.

Always ask

Very annoying as many sites like to give you cookies via the banner ads. So you will get prompted a lot. This is the setting I generally use when I have cookies on though. As I said on the previous one, many sites will ask to give you a cookie, so every time a banner ad is hit you can almost always expect to be prompted.

Store but don’t use

Pointless, and to be honest I’ve never tested to see if in reality this is any different from Always for the next session. If it does work separately then it could be of use if you were curious about what cookies you were being sent but didn’t really want to work with them. However you could see problems if you don’t want to have cookies on all the time.

This comes in with CAB assuming that you will always want to use a cookie that you have accepted in the past.

If you are purchasing something or dealing with an online group or email list then you will probably want to have cookies. Many sites that like to do things via cookies will still work without them. In my opinion being more on the side of a privacy nut, I use the absolute never 90% of the time.

I hope that explained them from my perspective. Many will disagree

though."

Chris Simon adds:

"In general, cookies are benign and harmless. They simply store information about yourself that the site may want to refer to later when you revisit or go to another page. "Information about yourself" might sound sinister, but all this amounts to is personalised information, such as your name, your preference settings for a particular site etc. Nothing that the site couldn't obtain normally anyway, but just wants to 'remember you' for your next visit.

Also, some dynamic web pages use cookies to store session variables between pages, like global variables within a program. Web connections are 'stateless', i.e. when you go to the next page in a web site, that page invokes a new connection and has no idea that you've gone to it from a previous page. Sessions variables allow information to be passed from page to page, e.g. you may have 'logged on' to a web site - a session variable stores this fact so that you don't have to log on to each individual page.

In other words, I would go for the Always option. It allows web sites to work properly and saves you the hassle of confirming it each time."

Stephen Moss asks a pretty good question about the order in which accessories are run:

"I know that Auto folder programs run in the order in which they were placed in the folder, but if I you were to have more than 6 accessories on your root drive which 6 would be loaded?, the first six by filename or by order as in the Auto folder.

This has never been a problem for me but I was just curious to know if anyone has tried it and what happened."

Peter Schneider tells Stephen:

"The first six by physical order, I think. The same as with the AUTO folder.

But there were solutions to overcome that problem. IIRC, there was a multi accessory that would load more than 6, by Antic Software (Charles Johnson?).

And CHAMELEON was able to replace a loaded ACC with an other one."

'Mark' adds:

"I would imagine physical order in the 'FAT' rather than by name, date or whatever (just like the auto folder). There are programs about that remove the 6 ACC prog limit."

Well folks, that's it for this week. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - 'Fear Effect 2'! 'Quake 3 Arena'!
"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""" 'NBA Shootout 2001'!
Sony Defends PlayStation!
And more!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
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Eidos' Fear Effect 2: Retro Helix Arrives in Stores

Eidos Interactive announced that its hard-hitting action title Fear Effect 2: Retro Helix will arrive in stores beginning February 21 for the PlayStation game console. Developed by Kronos Digital Entertainment, Fear Effect 2: Retro Helix is the prequel to the original critically-acclaimed Fear Effect video game. The game's timely plot centers around four main characters' attempts to save mankind from a mysterious threat originating within human DNA.

''The Kronos team has dedicated itself to creating an incredibly impressive addition to the Fear Effect franchise," says Sean Amann, Marketing Director of Eidos Interactive - US. ''Fear Effect 2 provides gamers with a seamless gameplay experience, balancing intense action, engrossing storyline, gorgeous anime-style characters, and challenging puzzles."

Fear Effect 2 begins when the video game's main characters are hired to acquire separate items for unknown purposes. The cast includes Hana Tsu-Vachel, a beautiful assassin; Rain Qin, an unparalleled beauty wrapped around a dark secret cipher; Royce Glas, a master operative in the field of counter intelligence; and Jakob ''Deke" Decourt, a cold blooded killer who perceives life as a trivial highway to obscurity paved in dull gray and numb. What starts out as a routine infiltration and retrieval assignment for the adventurers spawns a chain of bizarre events that forces our unlikely heroes to put aside their differences and unite their skills to save the world from impending doom.

Featuring stunning 3D-rendered environments and cinematic-style camera manipulation, Fear Effect 2 takes gamers on a journey across the globe, from mystical locations in China to New York City's back streets. Gamers confront an all-new cast of enemies, each designed and programmed to take full advantage of the environment in which they dwell. The Fear Effect team each have unique fighting styles to combat enemy attacks. For example, Hana's specialty is the judo kick while Deke masterfully executes a spiked brass knuckle hand attack. Other artillery available in each player's arsenal include the charge-based Electro-Magnetic Pulse (EMP), a variety of pistols, submachine guns, a flame-thrower, and other character-specific

weaponry. Fear Effect 2's newly-implemented true 3D control scheme allows for customizable navigation within the game.

Fear Effect 2: Retro Helix is backed by a nationwide print and online advertising campaign. The campaign, targeted specifically towards mature gamers, will run exclusively in men's lifestyle magazines, gaming publications and web sites. Eidos has also created a dedicated Fear Effect 2: Retro Helix web site located at www.feareffect.com. Fear Effect 2: Retro Helix is rated 'M' for Mature by the ESRB.

It's Time for NBA Fans to Lace Up Their High Tops as 989 Sports Announces The Arrival of NBA Shootout 2001 for the Playstation2

Sony Computer Entertainment America (SCEA) Inc. announced that NBA ShootOut 2001 from the 989 Sports development team is now available in stores, marking the first installment of the ShootOut franchise for the PlayStation2 computer entertainment system. Designed to provide gamers with the ultimate NBA basketball experience, NBA ShootOut 2001 features stunningly detailed graphics, exciting true-to-life gameplay and a revolutionary new network-quality game presentation that blurs the distinction between game and on-the-court basketball action. NBA ShootOut 2001 also comes complete with a variety of camera angles provided by twenty-two cameras, play-by-play commentary from New Jersey Nets broadcaster Ian Eagle, extensive rosters including veteran and rookie players from all 29 NBA teams, authentic NBA playbooks, real NBA arenas, and the ability to play in the NBA All-Star Game, Playoffs and NBA Finals.

NBA ShootOut 2001 for the PlayStation 2 takes a videogame franchise that has always been graphically impressive to new levels of realism. With a newly designed game engine that operates at 60 frames per second, gamers will be treated to state-of-the-art ball, rim and collision physics. Arenas are designed perfectly to mimic their real-life counterparts and, when combined with flawless floor graphics for every NBA team, NBA ShootOut 2001 presents an NBA environment that is unparalleled.

''Sony Computer Entertainment America is delighted to offer the most realistic pro basketball game on the market, NBA ShootOut 2001," said Ami Blaire, director of product marketing, Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. ''Working within the expansive capabilities of the PlayStation 2, the 989 Sports development team produced an amazing end-result. The detailed graphics and improved gameplay make the latest version of ShootOut the best yet and we are confident that fans of the franchise and new gamers will all agree."

To complement the enhancement of the game's graphical elements and contribute to the highest level of realism, controls have been made more intuitive in order to equip gamers with superior responsiveness and control. Franchise-exclusive features including Advanced Dribbling Control, Touch Shooting and Auto Defend put one-touch control at the gamer's fingertips, making it easier to maneuver players and execute special moves.

Leveraging the power of the PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system, NBA ShootOut 2001 also offers a significant hike in the volume of motion-captured animations. More than 1,000 authentic NBA moves and over 50 signature dunks have been motion-captured by incorporating the moves of NBA stars such as Jason Kidd of the Phoenix Suns. Player models have been

designed with 18 times the clarity of their PlayStation counterparts, including height, weight, body style, texture-mapped faces, head shapes and skin tones. Team specific playbooks with over 450 plays have been created in cooperation with some of the NBA's top players, including Chris Webber, Charles ''Bo" Outlaw and Jerry Stackhouse. Also, for the first time in the history of the NBA ShootOut franchise, animated referees will be calling the game from the floor.

NBA ShootOut 2001 for the PlayStation 2 Key Features:

-- Exclusive Match-Up & Deny, Read & React A.I. -- This means you'll need to "show up for the game". The artificial opponent now knows how to better manage passing, fouls, timeouts and the clock
-- Icon Passing -- Pick your passes and get the ball to a specific teammate. Work the D or get the ball outside for the open three
-- Touch Shooting -- Refine your touch by using the touch shooting meter to control the accuracy of your shot
-- Advanced Dribbling Control -- Ball control is key -- new special moves include the spin, between the legs, crossover and behind the back
-- Signature Dunks -- More than 50 signature dunks including the two-handed, between the legs, cradle, and tomahawk jams
-- Hot Streaks -- Hit three in a row and you are in the zone. Miss too many and you could struggle to make a lay-up
-- Create Player -- Utilize player ratings to create an all-world talent or design a player to reflect your own characteristics
-- Comprehensive Statistical Analysis -- Stats for teams, individuals, league leaders, standings, and comparison charts for teams and players help you to realize your strengths and weaknesses and let you know how you match up against the rest of the league
-- Extensive Roster Management -- Edit your starting lineup, trade players or release and sign free agents to build your own power dynasty
-- Six Game Modes -- Exhibition, Season or Playoffs in Simulation and Arcade modes, each with four levels of difficulty
-- Extensive In-Game Options -- Control every aspect of the game from quarter length to fatigue, touch shooting, player ID, and auto replays

The independent Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) rates NBA ShootOut 2001 ''E" for ''Everyone."

Capcom's Onimusha Warlords Delivers On the Playstation 2 Promise of Advance Graphics, Technology and Gameplay

Capcom announced Onimusha Warlords for the PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system will go on sale March 14, 2001 in North America. Onimusha Warlords fulfills PlayStation 2's promise to deliver the most advanced graphics, state-of-the-art technology and incredible gameplay. Onimusha Warlords is the first video game to truly showcase a higher standard that consumers expect in the PlayStation 2. It is the most technically advanced video game ever conceived and was honored with the distinction of being named ''Best of Show" at the SIGGRAPH 2000 Computer Animation Festival. Onimusha Warlords is an epic saga of 16th century Japan inspired by the battle scenes of famed Japanese director Akira Kurosawa.

Onimusha Warlords is currently enjoying phenomenal success in Japan having released on January 25 and shipping nearly 900,000 units to date with sell through of more than 700,000 units. This epic masterpiece is supported by a

North American multi-million dollar marketing campaign includes TV advertising that begins March 16 and runs six weeks. With the support with a multi-million dollar marketing campaign and achieving record sales in Japan, Capcom predicts Onimusha Warlords will be must own for PlayStation 2 owners. Onimusha Warlords is rated ‘‘M" for mature audiences by the Entertainment Software Rating Board and carries a suggested retail price of $49.95.

‘‘What a phenomenal way to usher in Capcom’s epic PS2 masterpiece," said Bill Gardner, president and CEO, Capcom Entertainment. ‘‘The Capcom team has done a tremendous job of creating and marketing a stunning game that could only be brought to market with the power of the PlayStation 2. The US will launch Onimusha in March with the backing of a multi-million dollar marketing campaign that will reach consumers via television, radio, print, retail and online. The success Onimusha has enjoyed in Japan we can only hope to eclipse here in America."

Gardner went on to add, ‘‘This is certainly not the first time Capcom has achieved sales records in the company’s 21 year history. The most notable and perhaps best example is when the original Resident Evil game for the original PlayStation sold more than a million units worldwide in less than six months. Some credit Resident Evil for driving PlayStation hardware sales. The expectation is for Onimusha to do the same. That tremendous achievement five years ago seems to pale in comparison with the achievement Onimusha is certain to obtain in 30 days in Japan alone. We believe this is a ’must-have’ game for PlayStation 2 owners and expect them to come out in droves to get their hands on the most incredible PS2 game of all time!"

Onimusha Warlords takes place in a world of darkness and magic, when power hungry warlords battle for control of Feudal Japan. One brave Samurai, Samanosuke, boldly volunteers to rescue the kidnapped princess Yuki, but even Samanosuke does not realize the desperation of this mission. An entire legion of demon warriors stands between him and his mission to avenge the princess.

The Siggraph ‘‘Best of Show" award was bestowed to Onimusha Warlords for the five minute opening movie animation created using an optical motion capture system to ‘‘film" six samurais battling simultaneously. Onimusha’s other motion picture quality production values include, a script written by Flagship, the company who penned the story lines for the Resident Evil series; a 200-piece orchestra who performs the original musical score; and famed Japanese actor Takeshi Kaneshiro as the lead character. Onimusha: Warlords takes advantage of the power of the PlayStation 2 by delivering finely detailed character graphics created at 10,000 polygons per character.

SegaNet Wages ’Un-Civil War’ With Quake III Arena, Marking the First Online Console Tournament Ever

SegaNet Partners with TeamSphere Interactive to Enhance the Online Gaming Experience While Establishing Ongoing Tournaments for Online Gamers

Strap on your boots, it’s battle time! Today, SegaNet announced ‘‘Un-Civil War," the first in a series of online console tournaments. From February 22 through April 2, players using Quake III Arena for the 128-bit, Internet ready Sega Dreamcast will be able to experience a tournament like no other.

Players can register at www.sega.net/tournaments.

‘‘There’s nothing more gratifying than seeing your name in lights and no one knows that better than Quake players," said Skip McIlvaine, director of business development, Sega.com. ‘‘Quake tournaments are a legacy in the PC world, now console gamers can finally get to the heart of online gaming."

The Un-Civil War consists of two competitions -- the time flexible ‘‘Open Ladder" and the fixed event schedule of the ‘‘Main Tournament."

Open Ladder is an open-ended and persistent competition where there are four weeks of online play with points being awarded for match wins and losses. Players don’t need to commit to a fixed event schedule in advance and can play as little or as much as desired. They will be ranked on the basis of points to determine the top weekly finalists who will then advance to the Main Tournament. The Open Ladder will be held on SegaNet servers for SegaNet subscribers, SegaNet trial members and Sega.com Society members. Even after the final prizes have been awarded, players can continue to battle for supremacy through an ongoing ranking system that will determine the best of the best Quake III Arena players.

Within the Main Tournament, competition is not taken lightly. Players must adhere to a fixed schedule in the competition for top prizes. The events begin with four, 32-player, preliminary tournaments divided according to different geographic regions within the United States. After the one-week preliminaries, the top finishers from each of the four tournaments will compete in the national finals during the last week of the event. The Main Tournament will be held exclusively on SegaNet servers for SegaNet subscribers only.

The top three winners of the Main Tournament will receive a one of a kind, completely customized blue and orange Sega Dreamcast engraved with the winners’ names and their championship titles. All winners will also receive a ‘‘SegaNet Championships" T-shirt, have endless bragging rights and will be listed on Sega.net for gamers everywhere to see. For official contest rules and guidelines, players can visit www.sega.net/tournaments.

In order to bring the Un-Civil War tournament to online gamers, SegaNet has teamed up with TeamSphere Interactive. Utilizing TeamSphere’s Eventricity software, SegaNet can bring the best possible head-to-head tournament to the Quake III Arena enthusiast and casual gamer alike. The Eventricity content and community tools will help streamline player registration, player seeding, automated match results, and automated bracket updates.

SegaNet is bringing gamers the world’s first ever online console tournament. Let the battle begin.

Sony Moves To Defend PlayStation

Sony Corp.’s video game unit promised more games and a connection with Japan’s hit Net-linking cell phone service Wednesday to defend its PlayStation 2 machine, a money-losing business that has dragged Sony profits.

Sony Computer Entertainment president Ken Kutaragi said his business will pick up soon when shipments start catching up with demand, especially in

the United States and Europe, where the consoles are in short supply.

Sony is also banking on linking up with ‘‘i-mode," the cell phone Web service from NTT DoCoMo, hoping to tap into the 19 million i-mode users in Japan.

A cord to link the i-mode phone to the game console allows users to browse i-mode sites - such as colorful graphics, restaurant guides and train schedules - as well as edit and read e-mail on a bigger TV screen linking with PlayStation. The cable will start selling March 29 for 3,500 yen ($30).

‘‘This is a new form of communication entertainment," Kutaragi told reporters.

A parts shortage has crimped shipments of PlayStation 2, which went on sale in March in Japan and before Christmas in the United States.

Sony’s video-game business - once the star of the Sony group - lost about 13 billion yen ($112 million) in the third quarter ending in December, largely on the cost of launching the new machine. Software sales remained flat.

But Masahiro Ono, analyst with UBS Warburg Dillon Read in Tokyo, was optimistic about the future for PlayStation 2.

‘‘It’s gotten over all the initial bumps of hardware production," Ono said. ‘‘It’s not likely to run into too many risks from now on."

So far, Sony has sold 8.16 million PlayStation 2 machines - 4.4 million in Japan and 2.1 million in the United States. Kutaragi targeted 20 million worldwide sales for fiscal 2001.

Sony also promised to address the business’ other problem - the lack of exciting games to enjoy on the super 128-bit machine.

‘‘PS2 titles are going to be coming out at a fantastic pace," Kutaragi said.

In Japan, 370 additional game titles will come out for the fiscal year beginning in April. There are 188 games so far. Sony would not give figures for U.S. games.

Sony also plans to offer superfast links using optical fiber in Japan in alliance with game-software makers Sega Corp. and Namco at retail outlets and amusement parks starting this winter to lure game fans to Net-linking PlayStation 2 games.

Sony also announced Wednesday it will offer copyright protection and other networking technology to Japanese software companies and service providers as it begins to offer Net games in July.

Sony plans to start selling a hard-disk drive attachment for playing Net games on the PlayStation 2; the company has yet to set a price and sales plans in the United States are undecided.

Potential copyright problems have been a major reason why Sony has postponed offering Net links for PlayStation 2.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Mediator Negotiating in Napster Conflict

A mediator appointed by the judge in the Napster case has been negotiating a deal to allow the popular online music-swapping service to survive without violating copyright laws, according to a published report.

An appeals court last Monday upheld a July 2000 ruling by U.S. District Judge Marilyn Hall Patel, who found Napster guilty of copyright infringement. Patel appointed former federal judge Eugene Lynch as a mediator between Napster and major record companies, the article in the Feb. 26 issue of Newsweek magazine said.

Napster declined to comment on Sunday, citing legal constraints.

Lynch has already held one negotiating session in an attempt to settle the dispute and has scheduled another meeting, Newsweek said. Patel said last week she believes a compromise could be reached between the parties.

The Feb. 12 decision by the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals could lead to the shutdown of Napster, which allows the free swapping of music over the Internet.

Napster may already be coming to a resolution that would keep it afloat. On Friday, interim CEO Hank Barry announced that Napster and a unit of German media giant Bertelsmann AG had developed a membership-based model that would allow music files to be transferred from computer to computer.

Napster, developed by 19-year-old college drop-out Shawn Fanning, lets fans swap songs for free by trading MP3 files, a compression format that turns music on compact discs into small computer files.

Napster Planning Fees Starting in Summer

Outlining plans to transform itself into a fee-based service, Napster said that it intends to start charging users this summer to exchange music files online. And the company said it has proposed giving $1 billion over five years to record companies, including the major record labels that sued Napster after accusing it of abetting copyright infringement.

Napster said it is contemplating charging users a fee between $5.95 and $9.95 to download an unlimited number of music files, and may charge an additional fee for users who want to transfer the files to their own compact disks.

But the business model depends on several factors, including whether

Napster users will be willing to pay, whether the company will be able to build the technology to securely transfer files, and whether the record companies will go along.

The details of Napster's proposals came a week after the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit here affirmed a lower-court ruling that the online service aids and abets the infringement of copyrights. The appeals court has sent the case back to the lower court to fashion an injunction that will prevent Napster from being used to exchange unauthorized, copyrighted material.

While the music industry has celebrated the ruling as precedent-setting, it remains under pressure to offer an alternative to users' mass exchange of music files online.

Record industry analysts said Napster's latest proposal might not be the prescription the record companies are looking for. Under the proposal, the five major companies would split $150 million annually, with the portion to each company determined by what percentage of their works are exchanged by Napster users. An additional $50 million a year would be split among independent music companies and artists. "We are putting a concrete offer on the table," Hank Barry, Napster's chief executive, said, adding that Napster has been discussing such a proposal in general terms with the record companies since last summer. He said he is going public with the details, including specific dollar figures not previously discussed with the record companies, to publicize the company's position.

"If Napster is shut down," he said, "it's because, even though our users are willing to pay, the record companies don't want to take their money."

But record company executives and analysts said that the amount of money is insufficient and that before any negotiation can begin, Napster must comply with court orders and stop permitting the exchange of copyrighted material.

The proposal "doesn't solve the immediate problem," said Richard D. Parsons, co-chief operating officer of AOL Time Warner. He added that as the record industry's $35 billion to $40 billion in annual sales could be threatened by Napster, the $1 billion proposal "does not strike me as being in the ballpark."

Michael B. Nathanson, a record industry analyst with Sanford C. Bernstein & Company, agreed that the figure is a drop in the bucket for record companies. The companies, he said, "are probably going to want more money up front."

At a briefing here today, Mr. Barry disclosed the specifics of the proposal along with Andreas Schmidt, president and chief executive of Bertelsmann E-commerce; Shawn Fanning, Napster's founder; and Thomas Middelhoff, the chief executive of Bertelsmann.

The companies signed a deal last year under which Bertelsmann, the German parent company of BMG records, agreed to invest in Napster in exchange for Napster's transforming itself into a for-pay service.

"As business people, it makes all the sense to keep this community alive," said Mr. Schmidt, who along with Mr. Middelhoff urged other record companies to join forces with Napster.

"If Napster died, it would be against consumer needs and it would be a big

defeat for the music industry," Mr. Middelhoff said.

Among the details Napster said it is contemplating is two-tier pricing. In addition to a premium service that would allow users to exchange music on an unlimited basis, Napster is considering a basic service where users could exchange a limited number of files each month, for a monthly fee between $2.95 and $4.95, Mr. Barry said.

Rick Ballenger, 18, a music education major at Northeastern State University in Oklahoma, said he had downloaded 300 songs from Napster. But he said he would not pay for the service, because once Napster started charging, there would be less music available as users opted for other, free services.

"I feel that Napster will be a limited source of music when a charge is applied," Mr. Ballenger said in an instant message exchange. "It’s only a matter of time before other programs are available."

But Rachel Martin, 12, of St. Thomas, Ontario, said she would be happy to pay a $10-a-month fee. "I would rather pay $6 to $10 a month for all the music I want," she said, "than to pay $20 for a CD with only around two songs on it I like."

Internet Bills Get Second Look In Congress

When it comes to Internet bills in Congress this year, you could say it’s deja vu all over again.

In a recent flurry of activity, members of the House and Senate have introduced bills targeting Internet taxation, online gambling, spam and Internet privacy. The catch is that they are for the most part virtually identical to bills that fell short of passage last year.

What has changed? Well, the bills’ sponsors believe the ubiquity of the Internet in our daily lives. Last year most of these bills cleared the House only to fall short in the Senate, a more deliberative body where with filibuster rules one needs 60 out of 100 votes to move most legislation.

With new tech-savvy senators such as former RealNetworks executive Maria Cantwell of Washington and former tech investor Jon Corzine of New Jersey, along with a more active Senate Internet Caucus led by Senators Conrad Burns and Patrick Leahy, the hope is that this year the Senate won’t see Internet bills face the same fate as so many dot-coms in 2000.

The greatest time pressure is on proponents of extending the current moratorium on taxes targeting the Internet. The current moratorium expires in October, and its sponsors have renewed last year’s failed effort to get an extension.

Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., and Rep. Christopher Cox, R-Cal., have together introduced bills in their respective houses that would extend the moratorium for five years, permanently ban Internet access taxes and encouraging states and localities to streamline their sales taxes so that online merchants could more easily collect them.

"Chris and I want to continue the e-commerce boom we’ve gotten from our

ban on discriminatory taxes, and make sure Internet access is never subject to an arbitrary tax scheme. We also want to extend an olive branch to the states" who fear the loss of sales tax receipts, Wyden said.

Sen. Robert Smith, R-N.H., has introduced two bills on Internet taxes, one calling for another five-year moratorium, the other calling for a permanent ban. The latter approach has been favored in the past by Senate Commerce Committee Chairman John McCain, R-Ariz., but is vigorously opposed by states.

A bill that would have banned most forms of online gambling sponsored by Sen. John Kyl, R-Ariz., and Rep. Robert Goodlatte, R-Va., last year fell just short of becoming law. With online gambling sites growing at an explosive rate, however, many in Congress still would like to pass legislation on the subject.

Already introduced is a bill by Jim Leach, R-Ia., the vice-chairman of the House Financial Services Technology Subcommittee and former chairman of the full committee. The bill, similar to one he introduced last year, would target financial institutions to prevent credit from being used in online gambling.

The bill by Kyl and Goodlatte took a legal approach and went after the online sites themselves, via the Internet servers that hosted their offerings.

"We’re going to give it another try," Goodlatte said last week, promising a reintroduction soon.

Spam continues to drive Internet users crazy, and it drives politicians crazy as well because it’s hard to craft effective legislation that doesn’t run afoul of First Amendment concerns.

Still, Rep. Heather Wilson, R-N.M., fresh off a tough re-election fight for a second term, has reintroduced her anti-spam bill. That bill passed the House overwhelmingly but died in the Senate. In its final form it was combined with a bill by Rep. Gene Green, D-Tex., who has already reintroduced his bill.

Of course, one issue is already drawing a flurry of attention, as well as legislation.

"Privacy is going to be a huge issue" this Congress, Rep. Tom Davis, R-Va., predicted last week.

So far, House and Senate leaders have not lined up behind any particular legislation, but that isn’t stopping bills from being introduced. Perhaps the most prominent one so far comes from Rep. Anna Eshoo, D-Cal., whose district includes Silicon Valley. Her bill lays out a formula that’s growing in popularity among those seeking a compromise approach on privacy legislation. In her bill, a Web site operator could not use any personal information on a visitor unless a privacy policy was posted and the visitor was given a chance to opt out of having the information divulged.

Congress is in recess this week, but upon its return the leadership of the key committees as well as the House and Senate leadership offices are expected to begin identifying which Internet-related bills will be placed on the fast track for passage.

Microsoft To Pay Bristol Technology

Microsoft will pay Bristol Technology an undisclosed amount to settle years of legal wrangling over Bristol's claim that Microsoft was trying to crush competition, the two companies said Wednesday.

Microsoft had previously been ordered to pay Bristol $1 million for unfair trade practices and $3.7 million to cover Bristol's legal fees. Both companies said that under the confidential agreement they will discontinue litigation against each other.

''It settles everything," Bristol spokeswoman Marybeth McGuire said.

Microsoft spokesman Jim Cullinan said the company would attempt to vacate the earlier rulings.

Lawrence Sullivan, a law professor at Southwestern University in Los Angeles said he didn't see a basis for vacating the rulings and thought it unlikely the court would take that action.

''That's a cosmetic ambition by Microsoft," he said, ''but I wouldn't expect that it would happen."

The settlement comes less than two weeks before a federal appeals court is to hear Microsoft's latest challenge of the court-ordered breakup of the company.

Federal antitrust investigators are also looking into whether Microsoft's investment in Corel Corp. reduces competition in the market for word processing and spreadsheet applications. The financially ailing Ottawa-based company makes WordPerfect and other software for the competing Linux operating system, an open-source platform that competes with Microsoft Windows.

Microsoft has settled several lawsuits in the past year or so. In January, the Redmond, Wash.-based software giant settled a 1997 lawsuit by Sun Microsystems Inc. that alleged Microsoft infringed upon a licensing agreement to use Sun's Java programming technology. In January 2000, Caldera Systems, which had accused Microsoft of killing its competing operating system, settled its antitrust lawsuit for an undisclosed sum.

Bristol sued in 1998, claiming Microsoft was trying to crush competition by preventing access to its source code, or software blueprint, for Windows NT.

Bristol, based in Danbury, Conn., makes a software product called Wind/U that allows programs written specifically for Windows to be converted to run on computers with different operating systems, such as UNIX. Prior to the suit, the companies had an agreement that allowed Bristol to see part of the source code for an earlier version of Windows NT.

In July 1999, a federal jury ruled in favor of Microsoft on other antitrust claims but found Microsoft had committed a deceptive act that violated the Connecticut Unfair Trade Practices Act. The jury awarded Bristol just $1 on that claim.

In August, U.S. District Court Judge Janet C. Hall increased the award to $1 million, saying a $1 penalty against a company like Microsoft was not

sufficient to fully deter Microsoft from similar conduct in the future. In November, the same judge ordered Microsoft to pay Bristol $3.7 million to cover legal fees.

BlueLight Illuminates Limits To Free Net Service

BlueLight.com on Wednesday unveiled the changes to its Internet access service, which include limiting customers' free Web access time and charging a fee for additional usage.

As previously reported, San Francisco-based BlueLight, the Internet arm of Kmart, said it would drop its free, unlimited Internet access model and move to a different strategy that included a fee-based system.

Beginning March 1, the company will give its customers the option of choosing between two tiers of service. BlueLight's roughly 6 million customers will be able to choose from a basic package that gives them 12 hours of free Internet access per month or a premier package that gives them 100 hours of Internet access for $9.95 a month.

As part of the new plan, BlueLight's Internet service provider customers also can get a month of free Internet access for a limited time by purchasing an item at BlueLight's e-commerce site. Shoppers will be able to earn more free months for every $50 they spend before taxes and shipping costs for an order totaling over $100. BlueLight's e-commerce site sells everything from clothing to toys, books, CDs and jewelry.

BlueLight, which entered the free ISP business after acquiring certain assets from the now defunct Spinway.com, has joined a growing trend of companies that have recently ditched the no-cost model. Many companies have said the free ISP model is not a viable business.

Last December, Web portal AltaVista shuttered its free Internet access. The company's parent, CMGI, terminated its free ISP holding, 1stUp.com. Another popular free ISP, Juno Online Services, has recently struggled with its free model, and last November imposed some restrictions on heavy Internet access usage.

BlueLight, which also provides Internet access to businesses, recently ceased providing free online services to retailers Costco, Barnes&Noble.com and Spiegel.

When the service launches next month, BlueLight's subscribers will have the opportunity to be automatically enrolled in the basic service. At that time, customers can choose to upgrade to the premier service.

Speed Still Telecom's Biggest Goal

Five years ago, a law was passed to relax the government's hand in regulating communications - from radio to cable to telephone - and let competition work to cut prices and usher in new services. The government still regulates, perhaps less than before, though some argue that innovation is bogged down in red tape and inertia.

While Republicans are now in control, the aim remains to get services such as high-speed Internet access more quickly to consumers. A recent FCC report found that cable TV companies raised monthly rates for programming and equipment by 5.8% last year.

The government stopped regulating most cable TV services nearly two years ago, following a directive of the 1996 law. The commission's new chief, Michael Powell, believes that when the government loosens its hold on companies, new players can come into the market.

Ultimately, consumers determine whether new enterprises succeed or fail, he says. The government might free up other sectors, too, such as the wireless industry. Those companies face a ceiling on how much airwaves space they can control in a market. They want that lifted and say they need greater room to offer consumers wireless Internet access and video, and other new services.

The Dial-up Modem Ain't Dead Yet

A new modem standard increases the upload speed of data transmissions and allows a data call to be put on hold.

There will be plenty of waves for analog modems to surf, thanks to a new dial-up modem standard and U.S. Robotics' plans to bring one of the first boards to the beach.

U.S. Robotics announced Wednesday that it has completed testing of modems based on the new V.92 standard, ratified late last year by the International Telecommunication Union. The modem chipmaker plans to ship products by the end of the first quarter.

The new standard increases the upload speed of data transmissions, allows a data call to be put on hold to take an inbound voice call and shortens the time it takes to make a connection.

It also should help ensure that the industry is not standing over the grave of dial-up technology.

"There is still a lot of room for the acceptance of dial-up modems," said Roger Kay, an analyst at IDC. "A majority of home and small offices are still and will continue to get online through dial-up modems."

Recent figures from Gartner suggest that dial-up modems will be around for a while. Data from the research firm indicates that 55 percent of all people getting online will be doing so through dial-up connections even by the year 2004.

The reasons are simple, according to Amy Helland, an analyst at Cahners In-Stat.

Analog dial-up modems are the only truly ubiquitous method of getting online, she said, because all someone needs is a phone line and because with no additional service fees or set-up procedures, as with DSL or cable connections, it's also the easiest.

"The horse hasn't made it to the glue factory just yet," said Kevin Lacey, a director of product development at U.S. Robotics, referring to the life

expectancy of analog dial-up modems.

The venerable modem maker itself last year got a new outlook on life when it re-emerged from the corporate fold at networking company 3Com, in a joint venture involving 3Com, Accton Technology and NatSteel Electronics. It named Van Andrews, a former Gateway executive, as CEO in July.

The V.92 standard allows someone online to place a data transmission on hold to take a voice call, then re-establish the data transmission without losing the connection. ISPs will likely determine how long a call can be placed on hold. Rob Thomsen, a product line manager at U.S. Robotics, expects that hold times most likely will be two minutes.

The standard also shortens the time it takes to get a connection by storing information about the phone line. Each time a dial-up connection is made, the modem undergoes a training sequence to determine the most efficient route to connect to the ISP's server. By remembering that information, it should take about half as long to establish a connection.

Probably most significant for dial-up modems users is the ability to adjust transfer speeds. Under the V.90 standard, the best-case scenario for data transmissions from the server to the client is 56kbps, and from the client to the server is 33.6kbps. Under the V.92 standard, upstream transmission of data, from client to server, can be as fast as 48kbps.

U.S. Robotics will allow modem users to set their modems to favor either the downstream or upstream transmission or to balance the two.

U.S. Robotics also will offer V.90 modem owners a free software upgrade to the V.92 standard by the end of the month. External modems using the V.92 standard will available off the retail shelf by the end of the first quarter for just over $100. PC Card versions will hit the streets within the next three months.

Cahners In-Stat's Helland expects ISPs to upgrade their servers to the V.92 standard gradually over the next three months.

Top-Dollar DSL

After vanquishing most of their competitors, the coast is clear for regional Bells to raise rates for broadband services over Digital Subscriber Lines.

SBC Communications is first out of the chute, quietly boosting standard residential Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) packages that sold for $40 per month last fall to $50.

Market experts predicted others will follow and prices will keep rising, forcing some hard choices for telecommuters who rely on connections to the home office via the turbocharged copper phone lines.

At the end of 2000, there were 2,429,189 DSLs in service, according to telecommunications research firm TeleChoice. By the end of 2004, there will be more than 17 million, the firm predicted.

Over the past few years, the Federal Communications Commission has promised consumers choice and competition in broadband services, but

nothing that it did was enough for many DSL competitors to survive against dominant regional Bell telecommunications powerhouses.

"The strategy for telcos in DSL has been to destroy the competition," said Alan Tumolillo, senior vice president at Probe Research. "That may seem bad in terms of regulations, but the people in Washington don't care."

The surviving regional Bells - BellSouth, Qwest Communications International, SBC and Verizon Communications - convinced regulators that their chief competitors for high-speed Internet access are the cable companies. Cable-modem access costs about $40 per month.

In the last six months, many competitive residential DSL providers have either gone bankrupt, sold out or ended the DSL portion of their businesses, leaving consumers in many U.S. regions a single choice for DSL service: the local phone company. The competitive fallout has opened the door for price hikes.

TeleChoice analyst Eric Rasmussen said the law of supply and demand is at work. "There will always be some competition, but a year ago, you had a lot of different DSL providers in every market," he said. "Now Flashcom is out, Jato [Communications] is out and HarvardNet is out. Those are a couple of pretty big providers that are no longer out there, so why not raise prices a little?"

Rising prices may force customers to back off their bandwidth spending.

"If they raised the price, would I still continue?" asked David Lechler, western U.S. manager at Canadian video-over-DSL company iMagicTV. "I would probably drop some bandwidth to save a bit on price." In his Denver-area home, Lechler uses residential DSL service from Qwest for e-mail, Web access and connection to his corporate network in St. John, New Brunswick.

The Bells and smaller DSL providers are facing up to the need - or the opportunity - to make money on the service, which has been offered in promotional packages for as little as $20 per month.

"I can only tell you that the margins are very, very small in DSL," said Russ Saito, a product manager at Verizon. "If you want to provide the service, you'd want to provide it at a higher cost, but the market isn't there for it."

Carriers aren't necessarily interested in selling everyone DSL. When customers order a second phone line for dial-up Internet service, the Bell can collect $20 per month from the line, plus possibly $20 per month as an Internet service provider. The phone company can also sell add-on services, such as call waiting, call forwarding, and local and long-distance charges. This could all add up to more than $40 per month for the Bell, with much less overhead than it incurs for DSL.

Eric Moyer, director of marketing at competitive DSL provider Covad Communications, said regional Bells, as well as competitive providers, created immense demand for DSL by keeping the prices so low. Once they realized they couldn't satisfy those demands and create any meaningful revenue, it was time to raise the prices and only serve those customers willing to pay a premium.

"They're probably realizing it's a little more expensive than they once thought," Moyer said. "They realized those price levels were not something they could sustain."

Probe’s Tumolillo said the Bells saw DSL as a way to get bandwidth hogs who wanted to download fat images and files off of the telephone network. But they didn’t anticipate the demand. Hiking prices may be a way to get the $40 monkeys off their backs. "For most carriers, each DSL subscriber that comes on is cash-flow negative for three years."

The Bells used low introductory rates to lure a critical mass of customers. That allowed their suppliers to ramp up production and pass on volume discounts on equipment.

Qwest still advertises a $20-per-month introductory package, but customers have to pay another $18 for Internet service, and they don’t get an always-on connection. "We are interested in increasing our footprint - in increasing the number of subscribers," spokesman David Goldberg said.

Some carriers may continue to shoulder discounted services because they can see revenue-generating potential in future add-ons. "There are going to be a lot of value-added services that providers can offer if they have a lot of DSL customers out there," Rasmussen said.

IMagicTV’s Lechler predicted that eventually there will be enough DSL-based services to warrant the increased prices. "It will be able to use a part for the Web and a part for television and a part for voice," he said.

The cable industry stands to benefit from DSL price hikes. "DSL is available in many more places than any other competitor to cable service," said Mike Luftman, vice president of corporate communications at Time Warner Cable. "If raising their prices makes our service look more attractive to customers by comparison, then that’s good for us."

Souped-up Power Mac Leaves The Gate

Apple Computer said it has started shipping the 733MHz Power Mac, its top-of-the-line desktop machine that includes a SuperDrive capable of reading and writing both CDs and DVDs.

The new Power Mac, which Apple announced at last month’s Macworld Expo in San Francisco, helps Apple narrow the megahertz gap between its computers and those that use Intel processors.

Cupertino, Calif.-based Apple had said the new Power Mac would ship in February.

Despite Monday’s announcement, supplies of the $3,499 systems are expected to be extremely tight. Apple executives have said demand is expected to be higher than supply throughout this quarter for the high-end machine, which also comes with Apple’s new iTunes and iDVD software.

The start of shipments comes on the eve of this week’s Macworld Expo Tokyo, where Steve Jobs is expected to announce new iMacs, most likely including rewritable CD drives.

Apple is counting on the new models to help boost sagging sales. The company lost $247 million in its most recent quarter as it slashed Mac shipments in an effort to whittle down 11 weeks’ worth of inventory that

had piled up on the shelves of retailers and distributors.

The effort succeeded in halving the inventory to a more normal five and a half weeks, Apple said last month. However, sales appear to have not picked up much in January. According to new figures from PC Data, Apple's sales in U.S. retail stores were down 60 percent last month from the same period a year earlier. Apple's overall sales, including mail order, were down 40 percent in January, year over year.

Salomon Smith Barney analyst Richard Gardner said in a report Tuesday that sales in Europe have been the only bright spot for PC sales but noted that just 20 percent of Apple's sales come from Europe.

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